



Gravity Hill XVII

Edited by: Anna Phelps

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Anna Phelps, *Editor*

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Editor's Note

I am pleased to present another round of *Gravity Hill* to our St. Andrews community. This 2024 edition includes an array of works, ranging from photographs to paintings, poems to short stories, and even includes a music composition! You can certainly tell from this display that our students, faculty, and alumni put their hearts into their work; I guarantee that at least one of these pieces will move you in a way that transcends your bounty of emotion.

In an effort to gain more submissions from the student body this year, I decided to host a creative writing workshop in January where students could come and either workshop their writing with me or create a brand-new masterpiece. I must say, it was quite a success; the pieces of writing and art that came out of it are amazing. I am very grateful for and proud of everyone who came.

Many thanks go out to everyone who submitted to this issue--I hope you're as proud of yourselves as I am of you. The creativity that you bring to this small campus is part of what gives us our character, part of what makes us stand out in an unending sea of academics and sports. I'd also like to thank my advisor, Professor Dendy, for trusting me enough to edit this magazine for the second year in a row. You've given me the confidence I've so desperately needed to power through my learning endeavors. I also want to thank the St. Andrews Singers for all of their support. They, alongside our director Elizabeth Blair, have been my biggest cheerleaders throughout this process, and have provided me with an abundance of literary and artistic wonders for this edition. Y'all certainly have my heart.

Congratulations to this year's award winners:

Editor's Choice poetry: Sean Owens, ***Symphony of Love's Confession***

Editor's Choice prose: Emily Rollins, ***The nightmare of lost memories***

Editor's Choice art: Peyton Schmidt, ***Frost***

Keep on keeping on, St. Andrews. Keep your creativity continuous, your passion persistent, and your uniqueness unwavering; the world could use a little more of you in it.

Anna Phelps, *Editor*

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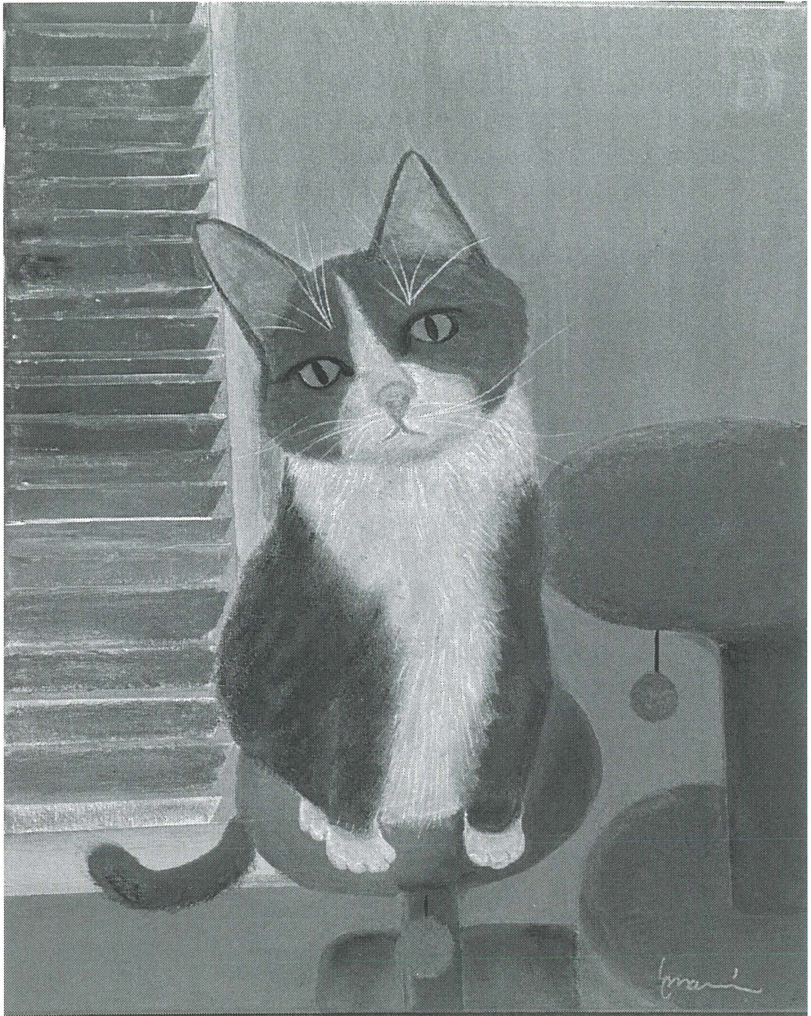
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Vinny Vin
Acrylic Painting by Emily Ortego

Symphony of Love's Confession

Sean Owens

In my world where love takes flight,
A connection formed, pure and bright.
Amidst the stars, like constellations,
Navigating emotions, sweet sensations.

Adorable, you are, in every way,
Nurturing warmth, like the sun's soft ray.
Noble-hearted, a spirit so rare,
Affection blooms like flowers in the air.

Amidst the echoes of whispered dreams,
Nestled in time, where love redeems.
Nurturing moments, tender and true,
Adorning life with hues of me and you.

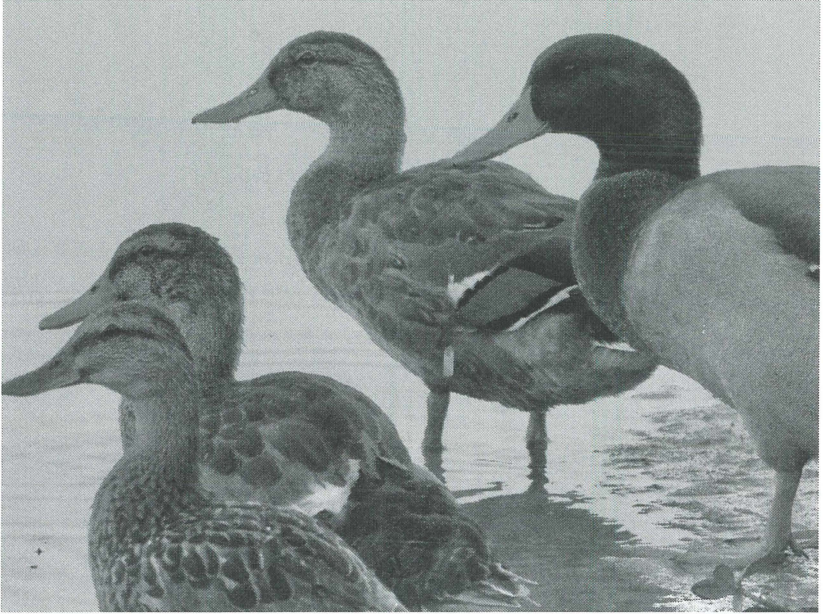
In your gaze, an angelic grace,
Noble is the heart, a steady pace.
Never-ending, this dance we share,
A symphony of love, beyond compare.

Amiable laughter, a melody sweet,
Nurturing souls that fate did meet.
Noble connection, an unbroken strand,
Adoration's song, written in the sand.

Like a guiding light, through the darkest night.
A gentle span of everlasting love, crafted for you.



You Are Loved
Anna Phelps



Ducks (2018)
Sean Moore

Immortal Oasis

Peyton Schmidt

After my last class of the day lets out, even though I have a car here, I choose to start the seemingly never-ending walk back to my room. Tense from carrying the weight of both my backpack and the stress of the day, it only seems heavier the farther I go. While I'm walking, I find myself using the scenery to distract me. As someone who finds peace in nature, I decided to stop and take full notice of the circle of land stretching out off the left side of the bridge. It seems so out of place, yet it seems to call out a silent invite to anyone who passes by. So, I decided to accept. Maybe it's the three empty benches that face out towards the calmly moving lake, or the four lone trees whose only jobs are to provide needed shade and protection to whoever decides to sit and stay a while. Or maybe, the silent offer of solitude and peace from the crowds of people coming and going across the bridge.

Having made the decision to walk against the flow of people to visit this place, I'm greeted by a large patch of yellow flowers, almost as if they were a walkway used to bridge the urban structures of the historic buildings and the opposing nature together. The soft grass and flowers are a much-welcomed contrast to the hard pavement of the bridge. Walking down this walkway, I look down at my feet toward all of the tiny individual flowers working together to paint the ground yellow. When I look up, I notice a memorial plate that has been placed in front of a short, bushy tree. It describes the history of this little circle of earth--the very spot where the bell tower stood--whose tone could be heard from anywhere on campus. But now, instead of the precise ringing of bells, the open space is filled with the sounds of slowly moving water and the quiet hush of wind blowing through my ears. Finally sitting down on one of the empty benches, the weight of my backpack

filled with books no longer rests on my shoulders, but on top of the old, grey, weathered wooden bench. Looking down to the ground, I notice a trail of ants that have decided to begin building their colony against the leg of the trusted old bench.

Closing my eyes to sit and listen, it's easy to be swept away by the sound of the water. It feels as though it begins to carry my stresses of the long day away on its gentle ripples. The gentle breeze that quietly moves the water and rustles through the trees, is hushed, though I'd much rather eavesdrop on the conversation between the counsel of these wise trees than to anything else right now. The cool shade provided by their strong branches offers me a cool and refreshing break from the warm sun. As the minutes go by, it's easy to feel as though time itself has stopped altogether--as if, on this piece of land, I'm accompanied by no one except the surrounding nature. The weights of the outside world are no longer being carried by myself alone, but by a group of bright little yellow flowers, the green grass, an old, weathered bench, the ripples of a lake, and the branches of the trees. With a newfound strength and peace, I quietly say goodbye to this little world, and the things that accompanied me in it. Walking back through the patch of flowers and onto the bridge, there is a new sense of ease in knowing that this little spot to the left of the bridge will forever be there to help ease the weight of whatever the outside world decides to weigh me down with.



Little World
Peyton Schmidt

Feed Your Fire

Jeff Cox, Esq.

Feed Your Fire

When the world is on fire, don't let yourself be cold.

When the thermometer is broken, don't lie about how you feel.

And when everything needs changing, don't lose sight of your passions.

Warm your hands.

Feel your truth.

And feed your fire.

To Have Is To Not

Dan Wetmore

To cut indirect
received from her,
caress divine
I'd offer pure,
if years would bow
and age allow,
and love transcend
why-nots and when-'s.

So thanks to she...
maturity -
preserving both's
propriety,
lest dreams which vie
unwitting die
at other dreams'
Awakening.

The nightmare of lost memories

Emily Rollins

She looked at the ticket in her hand, trying to make sense of it. It said, "New York to Boston, Seat 23A, Departure: 10:00 AM."

She looked out of the window, trying to recognize the scenery. It was a cloudy day, and the bus was passing by some fields and farms. She looked at the clock, trying to estimate the time. It was 11:15 AM.

She felt a surge of panic, as she realized she had no idea who she was, where she was going, or why she was on this bus. She searched her pockets, hoping to find some clues. She found a wallet, a phone, and a note. She opened the wallet, hoping to find some identification. She found a driver's license, a credit card, and some cash. The driver's license had her picture, her name, and her address. She read them aloud, hoping to trigger some memories. "Anna Smith, 123 Main Street, New York, NY." Nothing.

She turned on the phone, hoping to find some contacts. She found a lock screen with a password. She tried to guess it, but failed. She looked at the note hoping to find some instructions. She found a message in her own handwriting. She read it aloud, hoping to understand it.

"Dear Anna,

You have a rare condition called anterograde amnesia. It means you can't form new memories. Every hour, your memory resets, and you forget everything that happened since the last reset. Don't panic, you are not alone. You are on your way to Boston, to see a specialist who can help you. His name is Dr. Jones, and he is expecting you at 2:00 PM. His phone number is 555-1234. Call him when you arrive, and he will guide you to his office. Trust him, he is your only hope. Don't trust

anyone else, especially not the man sitting next to you. He is not your friend; he is your enemy. He is trying to stop you from reaching Dr. Jones for reasons you don't need to know. He will lie to you, he will manipulate you, he will hurt you. Don't talk to him, don't listen to him, don't look at him. Just ignore him and focus on your goal. You can do this, Anna. You are strong, you are brave, you are smart. Remember who you are, and why you are here. Remember this note and read it again every time you forget. Remember to call Dr. Jones and follow his instructions. Remember to avoid the man next to you, and don't let him stop you.

Remember, Anna. Remember.

Love,
Anna."

She looked at the note, trying to process it. She felt a mix of emotions, from confusion to fear, from disbelief to curiosity, from anger to hope. She looked at the man next to her, trying to identify him. He was a middle-aged man, with brown hair, blue eyes, and a friendly smile. He looked at her, trying to catch her attention. He said, "Hi, Anna. I see you've read your note again. You know, you don't have to believe everything you write. You don't have to trust this Dr. Jones. You don't have to avoid me. You don't have to be afraid. You can talk to me, you can listen to me, you can look at me. I'm here to help you, Anna. I'm here to tell you the truth. I'm here to save you from yourself. I'm your friend, Anna. I'm your husband."

He reached for her hand, trying to hold it. She pulled away, trying to resist him. She said, "No, you're not. You're lying. You're my enemy. You're trying to stop me from reaching Dr. Jones. You're trying to hurt me. Don't talk to me, don't listen to me, don't look at me. Just leave me alone, and let me go. I don't need you, I don't want you, I don't trust you. I need Dr. Jones, I want Dr.

Jones, I trust Dr. Jones. He is my only hope. He is my only friend. He is my only..."

She stopped, trying to remember. She looked at the ticket in her hand, trying to make sense of it. It said, "New York to Boston, Seat 23A, Departure: 10:00 AM". She looked out of the window, trying to recognize the scenery. It was a cloudy day, and the bus was passing by some fields and farms. She looked at the clock, trying to estimate the time. It was 12:15 PM.

She felt a surge of panic, as she realized she had no idea who she was, where she was going, or why she was on this bus. She searched her pockets, hoping to find some clues. She found a wallet, a phone, and a note. She opened the wallet, hoping to find some identification. She found a driver's license, a credit card, and some cash. The driver's license had her picture, her name, and her address. She read them aloud, hoping to trigger some memories.

"Anna Smith, 123 Main Street, New York, NY".

Nothing.

Colors on Fire

Anonymous

Light them up,
good we got 'em.
Another gone,
but not forgotten.

Flick a smoke,
throw one back.
Tie the rope,
pull that slack.

Look around,
faces turnin'.
Our home is gone,
stop the burning.

Sewn in doubt,
we're to the wire.
Broke and stomped out,
these colors on fire.



Owl
Rooney Coffman



Falcon
Rooney Coffman

Life Hurts

Sara Jeffords

'Speed up'
That's what I say to life
I want the good parts
It's not fair
All this pain
I have to go through
Life hurts

It's not fast enough
Things don't happen
Fast Enough
Why?
Can I not snap my fingers
To make everything I want
Happen?
Life hurts

At the same time,
It's too fast
I'm running out of time
Every day is a blur
Racing past me
Like a bullet
Zooming past me until it
Hits directly into my heart
Stopping my life
Ending it
Life hurts

Life should be fast and slow
When I want it
How I want it
Nothing is fair
I want out
There's too much yet too
Little
Going on
Life hurts

If it went my way
There'd be no pain
I'd have
Everything I wanted
I would be successful
I'd be happy
I'd be loved
But
Nothing's fair
I can't have what my
Heart wants
Life hurts

Help
My head is spinning
I have no patience
Left
Life hurts

I have too much stress
Drowning in it
Strangling me
Too many
Expectations
Help
How can I get out?
How can I make it stop?

No
I need to endure it
Fight it
Not let it consume me
Even though I know that
Life hurts

I will get what I want
This will only make me
Stronger
Just you wait



Longing
Anna Phelps

Laughing in Lazarus' Tomb

William Loftus

A narrow stairway winding down through stone,
cool and damp,
refreshing after the long walk and leaching heat,
leading down to the tomb.

Halfway down, laughter.
Self-generating, self-sustaining
Laughter.

Later,
shame, surprise, maybe understanding.
Maybe the laughter was already there,
and we hadn't brought it with us.

After all, this is where Jesus had said: "Lazarus, come
out!"
And Lazarus did come out.
Maybe he came out laughing, and hugged his laughing
friend?

Evolution: The Creation of Earth and Its People

Anna Phelps

Long ago, the Earth was nothing but a pebble--small and feeble, beige and content. It had been this way for ions, as Venus and Mars would peer over it to speak to one another. They never paid much attention to the pebble, as there was nothing spectacular to observe, nothing unique, nothing to catch the eye. One day, however, Venus went to call on Mars, when she noticed something odd about the pebble.

"Mars, do you see that?" she questioned. Mars looked toward Venus. He looked around, but saw nothing out of the ordinary; just the same old darkness that there always was.

"Venus, I don't see anything. I only see the radiant you." Venus blushed. Mars kept his eyes on Venus, watching her like she was the only planet left in existence. His eyes grew heavy with the weight of her beauty, so he shut them just for a moment. When he reopened them, he was glancing down. That's when he noticed what Venus had been talking about.

"We have to tell the Sun," he said, speaking with a hint of concern.

When the Sun came over, he instantly noticed the concerns of Venus and Mars. The pebble had changed. A beautiful blue had glazed over it. The Sun got as close as he could to the pebble when, suddenly, the blue began to rise, filling up its sky. Venus and Mars watched as the Sun grew panicked. The Sun didn't want the pebble's sky to flood and bear heaviness upon its shoulders, so he grabbed some cotton balls and placed them in the pebble's sky. The cotton balls began absorbing the beautiful blue.

The Sun watched from a distance while the cotton balls drank the pebble's heaviness away. However, he was growing weary. He looked over to Venus.

"Keep a close eye on our pebble. I'll be back to check on it." Venus nodded, and the Sun flew away.

Venus looked over at Mars. Mars gazed back. They had the same thought.

.....

The Moon arrived quickly, responding to the planets' plea for help. Venus and Mars promptly caught the Moon up on the events that had unfolded with the pebble. The Moon was shocked, but understanding.

"You did the right thing by calling for me. Someone needs to keep a close eye on the pebble until the Sun returns," said the Moon as she approached the pebble.

The Moon took notice of the handy work of the Sun. The cotton balls seemed to be absorbing the blue well. The Moon got even closer to the pebble's sky, extending her arm to touch one of the cotton balls. As soon as her finger touched one, it began to leak. Once it started leaking, they all began to trickle. The Moon quickly backed away. She was frightened that she had ruined what the Sun had done to help the pebble. She called back to the Sun, urging him to come as quickly as he could. The Sun, however, lived rather far away, and wouldn't be able to make it back for a while, so he told the Moon to stay and wait for him.

The Moon had fallen asleep some hours before and was suddenly aroused by a bright luminescence. The Sun peered down toward the pebble to see the damage that the Moon had done. That's when he noticed something odd sprouting from the pebble's ground. It was green and looked to be rather sticky. The Sun scolded the Moon.

"Look what you've done!" he shouted. "You've made the pebble sticky!"

The Moon looked down at the pebble and began to cry. She felt horrible for causing the pebble distress. She reached down to try and clear away the green stickiness. When her hand reached it, however, she drew back in surprise.

"What is it? What happened?" asked the Sun. The Moon looked at him.

“It’s soft.”

The Sun bent down to feel the green. She was right, it was the softest thing he had ever touched and smelled the way that the Milky Way feels. The Sun began to weep with the Moon. When they were finished with their tears, they looked back down toward the green of the pebble. They noticed that their tears had fallen amongst the green and were flowing ceaselessly along. It was mesmerizing. Beautiful strokes of colour began to appear on the ground of the pebble, right out of the green. There were pinks, oranges, blues, and even purples, and each one smelled like beautiful wonder.

The Sun and the Moon looked at each other with grace. They peeked behind them and noticed that, along with Mars and Venus, six other planets had taken watch, as did an endless amount of stars. The Sun gently cupped his hand to the Moon’s ear.

“Let us never leave,” he whispered to her.

The Moon smiled, but that didn’t last for very long. She thought about her home.

“But what about...” she began, but noticed that the Sun was gone. She looked down at the pebble. He was lying amongst the rainbow, underneath the cotton balls of white. He glanced at her, patting the spot beside him.

“We have to go home, Sun,” she said to him. “We can’t stay on the pebble forever.”

The Sun looked at her with realization. He had forgotten about the other planets that he had to watch over and protect. The Sun sighed, deep in thought. Then, he heard a star speak from above.

“I have an idea.”

The Sun and the Moon looked up to the star. With a twinkle and a whistle, that star, along with thousands of others, flew down from the dark of the universe and hovered above the green.

They rounded out their points, extending each arm and each leg. When their points were gone and they knew they wouldn’t be able to pierce the pebble, they landed on the green. The Sun looked down on his

children with pleasure. He knew it would be safe under his stars' watch.

The Sun and the Moon looked to each other, disappointment glazing over their eyes. Although the pebble was safe, they didn't want to leave. The Sun thought hard, but was at a loss. It was the Moon who had an epiphany.

"Let's take turns coming back to absorb the beauty of the pebble," she suggested. The Sun looked at her with a grin, pleased with her thought.

The Moon and the Sun decided that every twelve hours they would take turns watching over the pebble with its stars, not only to enjoy its radiance, but to make sure that the stars knew that they were safe, protected, and well-loved. Over time, the heat from the Sun and the pull from the Moon allowed the pebble and its inhabitants to change and grow, becoming a natural wonder that the stars of the green named

Earth.

The overthinker

Emily Rollins

I think too much, I know I do
I think of what, and why, and who
I think of past, and present, and future
I think of best, and worst, and better

I think of all the possibilities
I think of all the uncertainties
I think of all the consequences
I think of all the alternatives

I think until my head is spinning
I think until my heart is sinking
I think until my soul is weary
I think until my eyes are teary

I think I need to stop thinking
I think I need to start living
I think I need to find some peace
I think I need to just be me

My Story Is Not Over;
Mallory Stubbs

Life is hard and difficult.
Things came into my life
and threw it into turmoil.
I try to end it, because all hope
is lost. Anxiety sets in and I
feel alone. Giving up was easy.
Life spins around making
things dizzy. How do I hold
on? How do I cope?
Letting go is all I knew.
Reality brings me back.
I realize my story is not
over; I am here for a
reason. Never give up
hope. A new story has
begun. Anxiety is in the
ground. Do not let go,
Hold on tight. My story
is not over; a new chapter
has begun. My family keeps
me holding on.

[they say that we accept the love we think we deserve]

Gabrielle Wall

they say that we accept the love we think we deserve.
well, i say we accept the love we have always known. we
accept what we know as normal. we accept the love we
have watched every day because that is the only form of
love we know. i don't believe i deserve the love i watched
crumble to the ground, but i still accept it anyways.
because it is all i have ever known. what kind of love do
you know?

the heart and the mind are so connected to each other
yet so uninvolved at the same time. my heart wants to
be free of you, it's tired and worn out from all the
suffering you made me feel. it wants rest, but my brain
is at war. it doesn't want to let go of all the "good" times
we had; it wants to forgive all of your indiscretions. they
are the two little characters sitting on my shoulders
arguing back and forth while the rest of me spins out of
control, never knowing what to do or which to choose.

Masai Village

William Loftus

We had all wanted to go.
We were expected, welcome.
Take all the pictures you want, she said.
They'll pose for you.
Go into the huts, look around.
There's an old man over there,
playing a game with stones.
Later on, the men will dance.

It didn't feel right.
But I took pictures anyway.
Later, the old man at the big stone house
was happy to see us,
in his wheelchair,
framed in the doorway.
On the patio, tea and cakes.

She said he was sick and liked company.
It was his ranch.
The Masai stayed on his land.
They had had a deal for a long time.

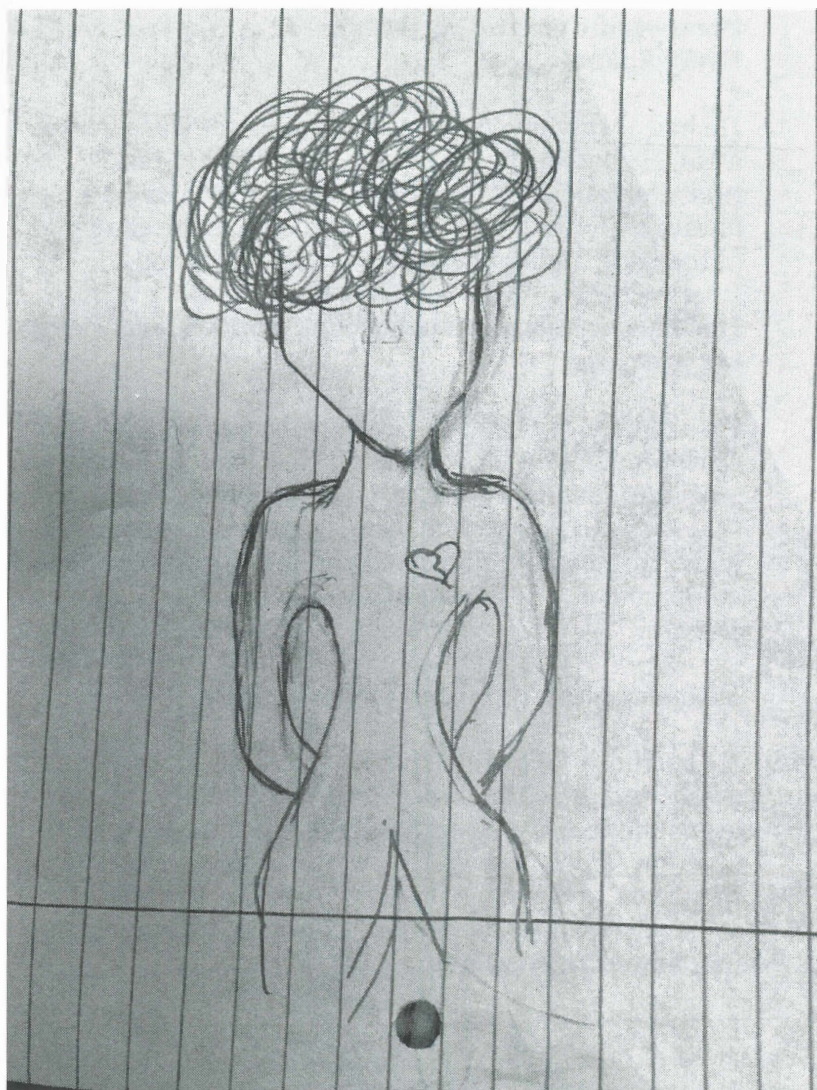
I was glad to leave.
We all got what we wanted.
But the price was too high --
for all of us.

Alone

K

She was Trapped in a small dorm all by herself
Drowning in her Misery and sorrows
She Was pleading for some help
No one heard her cries at night

She kept quiet and mostly to herself.
Smiling on the outside but really going through hell
All Alone but who could she tell?



Overthinking
K

Pirates of the Underground

Emily Rollins

He had always loved exploring caves, ever since he was a kid. He had always dreamed of finding hidden treasures, ancient secrets, or new wonders. He had always enjoyed the thrill of the unknown, the challenge of the dark, and the beauty of the underground.

He had never expected to encounter pirates, especially not in a cave.

He had been exploring a new cave system in the Caribbean, following a tip from a local guide. He had been told that the cave had a connection to the sea, and that it was full of strange formations and creatures. He had been curious and excited, and he had prepared his equipment and supplies for a long and adventurous journey.

He had not been prepared for the ambush.

He had been following a narrow passage, when he heard a loud splash behind him. He turned around, and saw a group of men, armed with swords, pistols, and torches, emerging from the water. They wore ragged clothes, bandanas, and eye patches, and they had the unmistakable look of pirates. They shouted and cursed, and they charged at him.

He had no time to react, no time to run, no time to fight. He was outnumbered, outgunned, and outmatched. He was captured, bound, and dragged to their hideout.

He had no idea what they wanted from him, what they planned to do with him, or what they were doing in the cave. He only knew that he was in trouble, big trouble, and that he had to find a way to escape.

He had to survive the pirates of the underground.

Here's to you, Vivie!

Amanda Goldberg

The old patterns persisted
toaster unplugged, dinner dishes
washed, the coffee pot filled
with dark French Roast
tepid by morning.

On Sundays at exactly 4 pm,
slouched in the recliner
with the wide armrests
in his undershirt, he would
read aloud the newspaper
and fall asleep
while he waited for the evening news.

He planted flowers in her favorite colors
every summer and brought home
her favorite doughnuts on her birthday.
He watched every sunrise and sunset
from the porch swing
and worked as he pleased around the yard.
He kept himself busy
tinkering around the house.
His family visited on weekends and holidays
and called him twice a week.
Everyone said they loved him very much
But she was gone.

Right choice wrong line

Emily Rollins

You are the sun, and I am the moon
You are the day, and I am the night
You are the fire, and I am the ice
You are the light, and I am the dark

We are so different, yet so alike
We are so distant, yet so close
We are so perfect, yet so flawed
We are so in love, yet so apart

We met at the wrong time, in the wrong place
We fell in love at the wrong pace, in the wrong space
We tried to make it work, but it was too late
We had to let it go, but it was too hard

You are the right person, but the wrong time
You are the right choice, but the wrong line
You are the right dream, but the wrong sign
You are the right love, but the wrong life

Who Knows What Song the Sirens Sang?

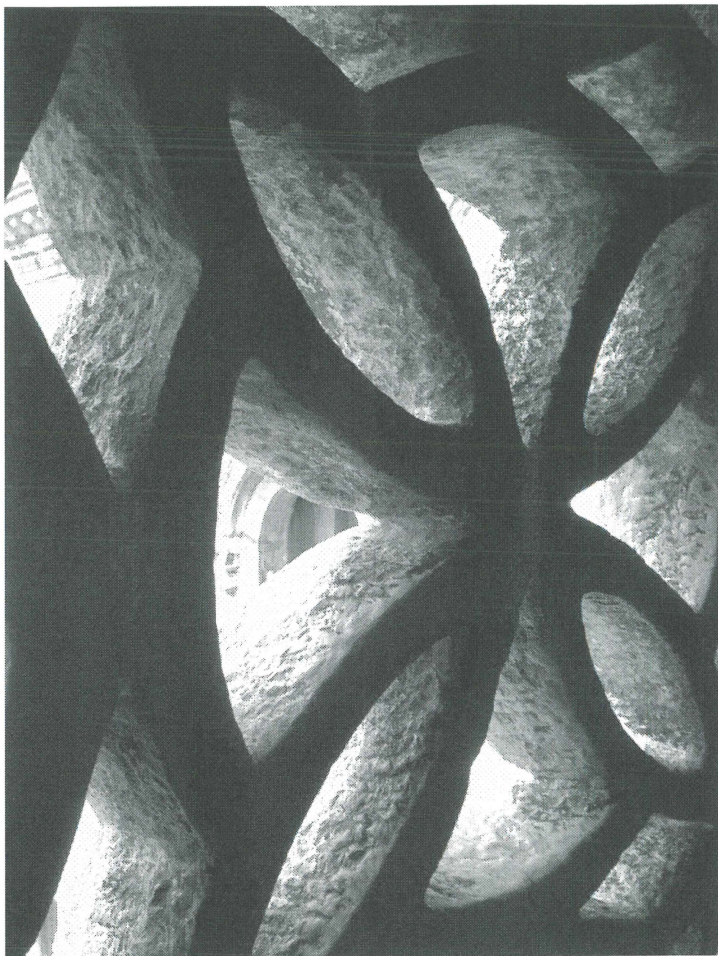
Dan Wetmore

Who knows what song the sirens sang,
the tune which tolled, the notes that rang,
and lured the main of men o'erboard
in need past want, vision's company toward?

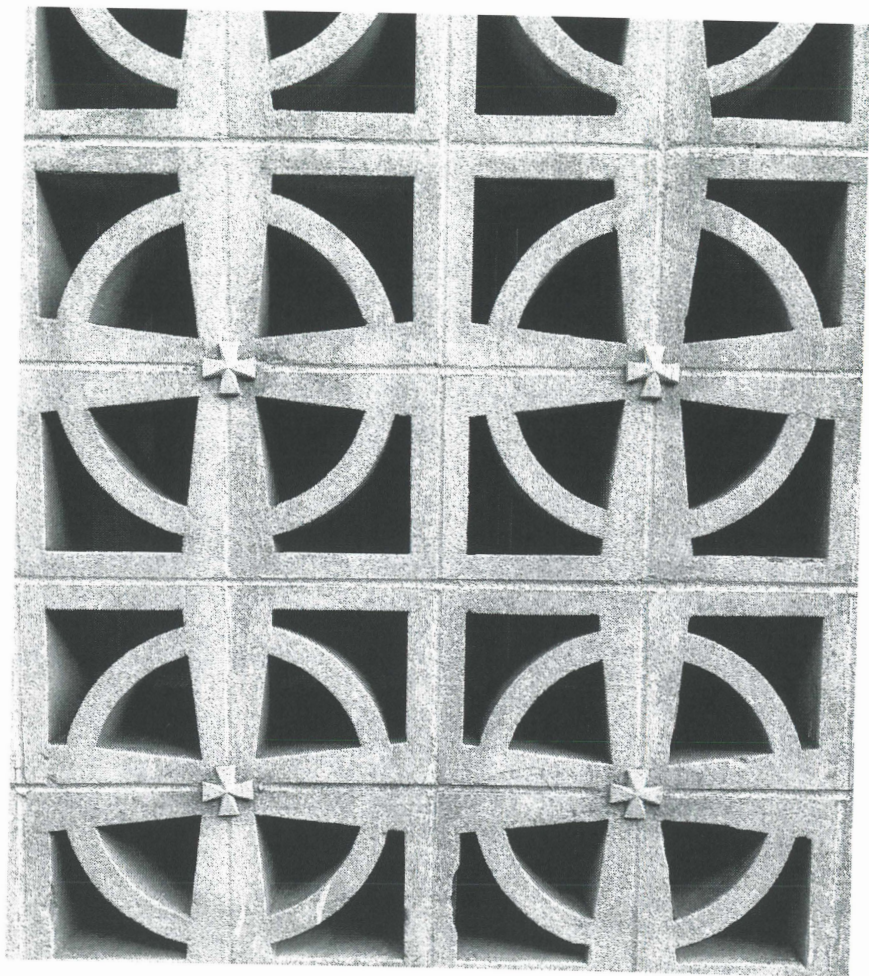
I know what lilted long ago,
the haunting lyric of timeless throe:
a dirge for dreamers, dying to die
in hopes by vision's side to lie.

Naught in this world enough to hold,
it all by maiden's light made cold;
their mournful croon, to death of death,
entices some to seek first breath,

to punctuate the pule and pine
for heart's discernment of divine;
by deep embrace of flooring rain
quench separation's searing pain



Bridge of Sighs, Venice
Betsy Dendy



Foundations
Elizabeth Blair

The Darkness

Kia Mingo-Strain

Trapped in a **Dark** hole

Trying to GET OUT

She felt Like she was Alone

CRYING, HURTING, and Betrayed

She felt like there was no HOPE

Zoned Out

Head Spinning

People moving slow

In an unfamiliar place

Not knowing where to GO

She was here but

She was really *Gone*

Trying to find a place to call her home

Scared, Pathetic, and Feeling

Ruthless on the inside

Her PAIN leaves ME

Terrified.

While the shadow

Whistles aside

Looking for a

SafeZone to hide

Underground Adventures

Emily Rollins

Once upon a time, there was a brave princess who loved to explore the world. She had a special gift: she could talk to animals and plants, and they would help her in her adventures. She had a loyal companion: a white rabbit, who was always by her side, and who could dig tunnels and find hidden paths.

One day, the princess decided to explore a mysterious cave that was near her castle. She had heard rumors that the cave had a secret entrance to a magical underground kingdom, where there were wonders and treasures beyond imagination. She wanted to see it for herself, and maybe make some new friends along the way.

She took her rabbit with her, and they entered the cave. They followed a long and winding tunnel until they reached a large chamber. There, they saw a beautiful sight: a sparkling lake, complete with a waterfall and a rainbow. The lake was full of colorful fish and the walls were covered with glowing crystals. The princess was amazed and wanted to explore more.

She asked the rabbit to dig a tunnel under the lake and he agreed. He used his powerful paws to create a passage, and they went through it. They emerged on the other side of the lake, and they saw another chamber. There, they saw a different sight: a dark and gloomy forest with twisted trees and thorny vines. The forest was full of strange noises, and the air was thick with smoke. The princess was curious, and she wanted to explore more.

She asked the rabbit to find a path through the forest and he agreed. He used his keen senses to detect a safe route and they followed it. They reached the end of the forest and they saw another chamber. There, they saw a

shocking sight: a huge pirate ship, with a skull and crossbones flag. The ship was full of armed and angry pirates, and they were guarding a pile of gold and jewels. The princess was surprised, and she wanted to explore more.

She asked the rabbit to sneak onto the ship and he agreed. He used his small size and speed to avoid the pirates, and they climbed on board. They reached the captain's cabin, and they saw a horrifying sight: a wicked witch, with a black hat and a broom. The witch was the leader of the pirates, and she was using her magic to control them. She was also the one who had stolen the treasures from the underground kingdom, and she was planning to use them to conquer the world. The princess was outraged, and she wanted to stop her.

She asked the rabbit to distract the witch and he agreed. He used his cute appearance and clever tricks to annoy the witch, and he made her chase him around the ship. The princess used this opportunity to free the pirates from the witch's spell, and she told them the truth. The pirates realized that they had been fooled, and they decided to help the princess. They took their weapons, and they attacked the witch.

The witch was furious; she fought back. She used her magic to create fireballs, lightning bolts, and flying monkeys. The princess and the pirates used their courage, skill, and teamwork to dodge, block, and counter. The battle was fierce, and it lasted for a long time. Finally, the princess saw an opening, and she threw a bucket of water at the witch. The water hit the witch, and she melted into a puddle of goo. The witch was defeated, and the princess and the pirates cheered.

The princess and the pirates returned the treasures to the underground kingdom, and they were welcomed as heroes. The king and queen of the underground kingdom thanked them, and they invited them to stay as

their guests. The princess and the pirates agreed, and they celebrated with a feast and a dance. The princess made many new friends, and she had a wonderful time.

She decided to visit the underground kingdom often, and she continued to explore the world with her rabbit. She had many more adventures, and she lived happily ever after.

Endings

Amanda Goldberg

The doctors recounted a litany
of conditions,
A heart that beat too fast
hardened from years
of heavy smoking and bitterness,
lungs blackened with tar
and things left unsaid,
kidneys that could no longer filter
the toxins that flowed from her life.
She was on oxygen
that was never enough.
She struggled to breathe in every moment
and begged for the end to come.

Am I still alive?

Yes.

Shit.

Shit.

When she finally passed
I rooted through closets
looking for pieces of her story
and mine.

Black and white photos--
a smiling, young woman
fit, blonde,
flirting for the camera,
smiling with her first husband;
a young mother, laughing
with my two half-sisters,
their chubby toddler legs
sunk in a rubber kiddie pool.

Another box—the photos change;
a furrowed brow,
stiffer lips,

all traces of softness slipped away.
At the bottom of the box,
a colored photo;
my mother holding a wailing newborn,
jaw set in a hard line,
smile gone from her eyes,
my father a blur in the background.
This is the only picture I have
of my mother and me together.
I am told many things of my mother,
but they are stories of a stranger.
She dressed well
and liked to dance.
She had a beautiful singing voice.
She used to drive,
though she was terrible at it.
Story after story of people
and parties
and a life well lived,
before she retreated to lying
passed out in a stupor of sadness
and regret.
I can't reconcile the woman
in the pictures
with the woman I knew.
How had we ended up
with such different endings
to the same story?

Now and then,
I did catch glimpses
of who she could be,
which made me chase after
a shadow I could never catch
and ache with the need
for the love of a mother
I would never have.

My mother was a double-edged sword.
She was great when she was not lost

in the fog of pills and depression.
She laughed hard,
enjoyed recipes and romance magazines.
She could spend hours on the porch,
taking in the evening air,
recounting memories, chatting.
She could be a typical mother,
who made cookies
and fussed over wrinkles in my clothes.
These memories are few and far between.
More often than not,
she was a fierce adversary,
cutting straight to the bone,
always going for the lowest blow
without hesitation or remorse.
Armored only in my longing
for who I wished she was,
I was slashed by the gentleness
I knew she could possess,
run through by her wrath
for my shortcomings.
All measure of my self-worth
wrapped up in a mother
who loved with a barbed wire heart,
so I learned to cut myself deeper
and let the wounds bleed clean.
I am adrift in the loss of her,
though I have lost her in pieces
and grieved her
my entire life.

I carry the weight of her
Addiction
Anxiety
Irreconciliation.
I know she carried too much,
And maybe she didn't know
how to set it down,
so she thrust its weight
on the shoulders of her children.

I carry the weight
of her abuse
every day of my life
and try to lose it,
piece by piece,
so my own children will never
have to bear the burden
of unhealed hurts.

And now we are full circle;
There will be no more phone calls
Or forced visits,
No more waiting,
No more sick feeling
or breath hitched in my chest.
There is just radio silence
that follows a broken connection.
I have lost the last piece,
the possibility
of a different story,
a different ending,
and I have learned
that the story of your own life
can be a crippling weight
to carry.

W(h)ither Solstice

Dan Wetmore

I - Simple Past

In ancient days,
our forebears - knee-high, and
knee-deep in the Holocene -
intuitively approached
the slender solstice with
supplication's trepidation.
Unnerved by sun's ever-more
enfeebled leaps to clear a
fixed & flat Earth's hurdle,
the auric's arcs in atrophy,
it dawned, "It will only get darker."

And kenning that
"half of anything"
beats "all of nothing",
those distant souls
bargained for a burgeoning...
imploing a restoring...
returning of the burning
to warm our way...

Our flagging fire's time-
lapsed scribing on sky
of a monochrome rainbow
offering no promise...
they tendered their own:
deference to forces
demonstrably greater,
capitulation to
rhymeless rhythms
- if only granted a
dwindling of the dimming.

II - Past Perfect

Then Copernicus' cunning
set Earth to circling & spinning,
floating on a drunken axis:
a toothpicked olive
lolling in Vermouth,
riding high the rim of
swirled stemware,
where all the darkened
vessel's lights converge
in the limpid limning;
the draught best caught
to throw back & quench,
as the fire's doused by the dark.

Solstice, simply pinchpoint in
the hourglass figuring of a year,
the waning a winnowing,
light's fall merely hastening
the passing's passing,
prompting laughing in relief
at past naiveté (not having appreciated
the gravity in the situation):
"It's only darkest before the dawn."

Most diminutive day, now
deigned occasion for celebration,
heralding a homecoming,
anticipating a waking,
our then-so-serious dry-run for death,
now merely rehearsal for reversal.

III - Present Tense

And perhaps it inevitable -
in a world ordered by orbits -
that monkey seeing would monkey do,
overthrowing evolution for revolution,
trading trees for towers of babble
when prehensile tails became prehensile tongues
and opposable thumbs revealed their true nature:
abandoning adaptation for alteration...
jilting the one's situation for other's altercation...
pretending primacy by mispronouncing
dominion "domination"...
putting the "decline" in declination...
rejecting this world - not of our making -
for a "making not" of this world...

Humanity's Mayfly impatience -
compounded by vestigial conviction that
heaven's denizens yet circle in homage -
temerity's eclipsed studied refraint,
complacency breaking our covenant
with creation...

...ushering a sudden change of -cene:
holo- deposed by anthro-,
former's "whole" truncated to "hole"
(preferred homonym of the hominid).

Enter the exit of the Anthropocene,
Narcissus' dream: one's name literally
(at last [at least]) written in the stones.
But at the last: a dead language
when all the fluent have fled.

Perhaps heliotropism's to blame,
our adoration of immoderation,

the obscene of the porcine -
loving the light to death;
this longest of our longest nights
donning the guise of most-searing days,
and mourning - our likely morning.

IV - Future Present

In first true reversal,
finally awake, anticipating a wake,
we appreciate the gravity of the situation:
“Darkest is the absence of a dawn.”

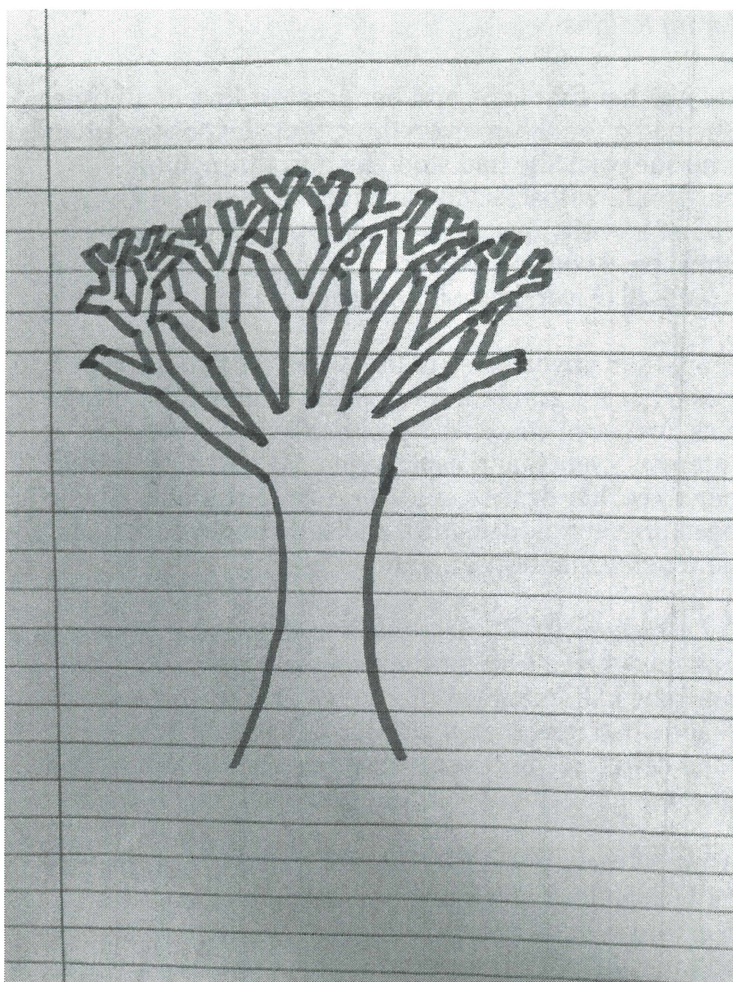
Yet here at point of greatest inflection,
we still dither with deflection,
wishing for one of greater reflection,
which pleads need to seek
a slim solstice of the selfish;
embrace begrudged truth that
everyone’s All
pivots on the fulcrum
of all’s One.

Having eschewed equipoise
for imbalance, thrown over
level playing field of “win some,
lose some” for a stacked deck of
“the house (dweller) always wins”,
we’d well take pains to once regain
the flexibility of 12/21’s reflexivity.

If we’d not raise our glass
to the razing of the hourglass,
the calling of “Time!” on time,
we’d best square the circle,
keep turning a corner,
find a swing of the pendulum

yet in reserve to reverse
a coarse course,
quash the caprice
of we pendulemmings
sailing toward the brink
of a world again flat.
Again stand still
that we might still stand.

Only then...
the solstice a poultice,
to blanch the bruise,
draw out the dark.



Tree of Life
Danksy

The broken truth

Emily Rollins

He was her first love, and her greatest love of all time. She had offered him everything that she possessed and who she was. She had stood by him through his hardships, setbacks, and aspirations. She had given up on her identity, her aspirations, and her happiness. She'd been committed, faithful, and loyal. She was his friend, his lover, and his companion.

More than anyone else in the world, he had always taken her for granted. All that she offered, all that she was, had been snatched by him. She had served his interests, wants, and aspirations. He had disregarded her voice, her desires, and her own sentiments. He had been ungrateful, deceitful, and self-centered. He was her enemy, her abuser, and her user.

It had taken her all these years to discover it. At last, she had recognized him for the true man he was, not the man she had imagined him to be. At last, she realized that he had never truly loved her. He had never been fond of her. He had never respected her and didn't now. She was not valued by him, never was.

After all these years, he had finally lost her. At last, he had pushed her too much, too hard, too far. At last, he had forced her to go, permanently, for real. At last, he had to confront the repercussions of his deeds, words, and falsehoods. Too little, too late, and too horrible, he had finally regretted it.

After all these years, she had finally achieved self-liberation. At last, she had rediscovered her courage, power, and dignity. At last, she had recaptured her identity, her happiness, her existence. At last, she had recovered from his injuries, scars, and agony. It had taken him all these years to discover it. The finest thing that had ever occurred to him was that he had finally

lost her. The one person who had ever loved him, she was finally gone from his life. It was only he who was to be responsible for her eventual loss.

The Unwanted Path

Mallory Stubbs

This is grief, this is loss.
This life without your sons.
This is what celebrating without them here is like.
Birthdays not being celebrated. Birthday songs unsung.
Christmas presents unopened, stockings left empty.
Easter eggs unfound.
Halloween costumes not being worn.
Turkey's not being eaten.
School events left unattended; school lessons left
unlearned.
Happiness not being celebrated of high school
graduations.
Wives not getting married.
Grand babies being unborn.
Death anniversaries are remembered instead. A
hollowed heart an empty soul as memories fade away.
Life forgotten, like they never existed.
The grief takes over and sucks you in.
Wanting to not be here and live without them. Life is
left empty.
This is the life that was chosen for me.
A life not wanted.
But an unwanted path that is walked daily.

[The wind howling across the plains]

Anonymous

The wind howling across the plains
Brings a curved look to her
Lips.
She thrives in the
Chaos of the world.
The wind slaps her
Face
As she smiles back.
The dark clouds fill the sky
Just as soon as they fill her
Eyes--
She smiles back again.
A calmness comes over the land,
A shiver goes down her
Spine.
Calmness is the eye of the storm;
The storm is watching her now.



Burst of Rays
Elizabeth Blair



Bubble
Anna Phelps

India, at *Fatipur Sikri*
William Loftus

It was a boa constrictor.
And there was a cobra, too.
And an old man with a flute,
just like in so many pictures.
One guy did it,
wore a boa constrictor,
and met a cobra up close and personal.
You should do it, too, he said.
I almost did.
But I didn't.
Regret has a long shelf life.

Broken promises

Emily Rollins

You say you love me, but I don't feel it
You say you need me, but I don't see it
You say you want me, but I don't hear it
You say you're sorry, but I don't believe it

You give me words, but not actions
You give me promises, but not solutions
You give me excuses, but not reasons
You give me silence, but not emotions

You make me feel lonely, even when you're near
You make me feel invisible, even when you're here
You make me feel worthless, even when you're dear
You make me feel hopeless, even when you're clear

You don't love me, you just say it
You don't need me, you just play it
You don't want me, you just fake it
You don't care for me, you just break it

[Missing:]

Elijah Frazier

Missing: Amanda White and Quinnnton Reeves, either one of them, please alert us and the police of their whereabouts, Call: 330-339-4656

My heart sank seeing this; our friends were now victims of a disappearance. The last time I spoke to Amanda was when she joked that she would run away one day and live on the tracks with Quinn. It was clearly a lighthearted joke, but a concerning set of last words.

I called my friends Pat and Joseph about their disappearance. Pat told me that it would be okay, since Amanda's parents were always crazy about her protection and Quinn's parents were a stick in the mud. Joseph, on the other hand, sounded like he was going to have a panic attack hearing this. He wanted to assume the worst since disappearances in our little town never happen, but I told him to calm down and that they would be fine, which felt like words for me as much as they were for him. Once I was done with the call, I was lying on the bed when I had an idea; an idea that would go on to change the lives of both me and my friends.

I was an adventurous person at the time, so I thought of an idea to convince my friends to explore their last known location, The Sunset Village Community Park. Joseph told me that that was the last place that Amanda's parents could have suspected they ran off to. I was able to convince Pat to come with me since he admitted that he had nothing better to do, but Joseph was a bit more hesitant.

"Shouldn't we let the police help? I'm not saying I don't wanna find her, but I feel like we might get hurt doing so, or even get arrested for trespassing," Joseph said with concern. He always had a fear of the woods and

everything in them. His family encountered a bear defending their cubs; no one was hurt, but Joseph's fear of the woods was born from this.

"Please, Joseph. What if Amanda and Quinn are ok? Wouldn't you want to tell them to come back? I know you're close friends with Amanda, so I doubt Pat and I could properly convince her," I say honestly.

"Ok Ian, I'm trusting you. Please don't make me regret this since I don't wanna get attacked by anything." He said he was trying to calm himself down on the phone, but I could tell he was panicking.

Joseph, Pat and I finally made it to the park. There were police interrogating the park ranger and asking the park personnel questions. I knew a secret entrance to the forest so we could proceed with our own investigation. Pat wanted to turn back since he's had bad experiences with the police, and would rather just let them handle it. Joseph told him we'd be fine and that he'll make sure that we aren't caught. I was a huge fan of the forest, unlike Joseph, so I knew every nook and cranny there; just like that, we were in the forest. We were probably there for about three or so hours, but I could swear we were there forever.

Pat and Joseph looked like they wanted to pass out, but I wanted to keep going, even though I looked just as bad as they did. They tried to convince me to just lie down and sleep on the grass, probably so they could try and get back home, or maybe because I looked unwell. They asked if I wanted to go back and start searching tomorrow. Joseph was fine with it, but Pat spoke up.

"I don't know if we're going to find them out here," he admitted, clearly annoyed with me.

“Why do you say that? They probably just ran away. Amanda and Quinn must have run off together,” I said, tiresome, but also defensive.

“I mean, they both threatened to run away because we’re together, so they have to have followed up on it,” Joseph said.

“I can see how Amanda can do something like that, but Quinn has a good relationship with his family; I doubt someone like Quinn would do something like this without a reason beyond a joke,” Pat said.

Admittedly, he was right. Quinn wouldn’t do something as petty as run away from home. Amanda, on the other hand, was a wild and excitable person, so she would probably sneak out and worry her family for fun.

“You act like you know the two so much when you’ve only known them for a week,” I said, gritting my teeth a little. Pat, unaware of my annoyance, continued on.

“To me, a week seems like enough to judge how someone acts. I’ve known you longer than that and it seems to me that you’re in denial about the worst-case scenario.”

That only made me angrier; I tried to hold it in. I really didn’t want to give up on them, despite the fact that what Pat was saying could be an actual possibility.

“Are you trying to say that they might be dead without being up front with me?”

Pat, a bit surprised, either from me figuring him out or me jumping to conclusions, tried to calm me down.

“Relax, I was just hoping that we could go home. Maybe the police can handle this since they’re 10 times more professional than we are.”

At that moment, I wanted to pressure the answer I wanted to hear from him.

"If you're so afraid of telling me they could be dead, then don't bother. Besides, the police don't start their search until 48 hours after the disappearance, so in your case, the only way to find them alive, mind you, is to find them right here, right now," I said this with even more annoyance. Pat was surprised.

"Ian, listen. If I really did think they were dead, I would tell you so. None of us knows if they're still alive or if they're--" and at that moment, either I was getting tired of Pat's pessimism throughout our search or just tired in general, but that last...final...comment made me snap.

"Or they're what, Patrick? OR THEY'RE WHAT?" I exploded at Pat. I even used his formal name, despite knowing full well that he hated when people did that.

Pat, justifiably taken aback by my explosion, tried to calm me down again, but I wasn't having it.

"You think they're dead, don't you?" I screamed as Pat started getting defensive.

"It's not that they're dead, it's more so the fact--" but, again, I wasn't having it.

"ANSWER THE QUESTION. IF YOU THINK THEY'RE DEAD, JUST SAY IT AND LEAVE!"

Pat looked completely nervous now; he probably *did* think they were dead, but he just wanted to come along to cheer me up. He even started to shuffle a bit to himself and stuttered, and he never does that. He was always the most logical of the group, but here he started to struggle, even to come up with a sentence. Looking

back, I felt horrible, but, at that moment in my mind, I didn't care, and saw that as confirming my suspicion.

"You can't say it because you know in your mind that they're dead. Why are you here then? Out of pity?"

Joseph, finally stepping in after being silent for a while, spoke up on behalf of Pat.

"Ian, just calm down. In Pat's defense, an animal could have come out and attacked them, or some...psycho could have chased them. You shouldn't rule this stuff out."

I didn't know what to feel. Joseph was my closest friend, but he was usually quiet. He followed up.

"Listen, you might be too invested in their disappearance. I get that they're your friends and you care about them, but we've been here for about 5 hours, way beyond the amount of time we should have been out here. Our parents are probably worried sick." He was right. We should have left by now, but I didn't care. I even blew up at Joseph, my closest friend.

"Oh, you're gonna take Pat's side instead of your best friend's? What has Pat done for you other than be a pessimistic jerk who only cares to bring you down?" Joseph looked at me, surprised, but his confidence, despite not having much, was unshaken.

"I'm not taking sides. What I'm doing is trying to calm you down. If you wanna keep searching out here and die, be my guest, but we shouldn't be here if you don't want us here."

At that moment, I finally realized that I was being an asshole. I could have blamed it on being out here for so long, but I knew that I was just being an asshole.

“Ok, I’m...I’m sorry. You guys just...go back. I’m just gonna reflect out here for a bit.” Joseph, also looking a bit down, left alongside Pat, leaving me alone in the forest. After about an hour, Pat came back and found me.

“Hey, Ian. Are you are feeling any better?” he asked, looking a bit better from earlier, but still sort of reserved from my episode directed toward him.

“I’m fine. What are you doing here? I thought you went back home.” I noticed Pat had camping supplies. He decided to set everything up.

“I did...I felt bad leaving you alone, so I decided to come back. I knew you would probably keep looking even if I came with you, so I brought camping supplies so I could stay the night with you.”

I was a bit confused, but also wanted to apologize, since I didn’t really apologize before.

“Hey, Pat? I wanted to say I’m sorry for blowing up at you. I was exhausted after 5 hours and was just getting bothered. I might have to face the fact that they might be dead.” Pat, feeling a bit bad as well, also wanted to apologize to me, at least assuming from his face.

“It’s fine. I kind of came here to say sorry as well. I was really nervous that something could get us out here, so I just wanted to do anything we could so we could go. I may be a logical guy but in reality...I’m a coward. I shouldn’t have been so dismissive of your friendship with Amanda and Quinn, though. That was terrible of me to do since they’re my friends too.”

I still felt pretty bad, despite his apology, but I’m glad that we agreed that there were no hard feelings.

For the next hour or two, we camped out there together, playing around and chilling near our fire. Joseph called me later, saying that he would probably join us in the morning to resume our search. We told him to take his time, and told him that we made up, which, I'm assuming, made him feel good.

After another hour, we finally started our campfire and cooked some food. Then, we heard a noise in the bushes. Pat wanted to reassure me that it's probably an animal, but I had darker ideas of what it could be; horrifying ideas.

If you don't already know, there's a rumor going around about this creature called The Blightwood. Usually, I wouldn't believe in folk stories like this, but this rumor feels different ever since their disappearance. The description alone of a 15-foot filth ridden monster is probably enough to keep me more afraid of the woods than I already am.

It was described as a creature that resembled a wendigo, but made of rotting, putrid wood with maggots and insects everywhere. The rumors also state that its eyes are able to entrance anyone who is foolish enough to look at them; that detail, right there, made me scared of this rumor coming true.

I looked scared of what the hell could pop out, even if the creature would be too big to hide in the bushes. Pat looked cautious, since he was familiar with what could be out here during this time, so was on guard in case it was a bear or a wolf.

When the rustling finally stopped, what came out was Joseph...s dog, and then Joseph himself.

"Why are you guys on edge? I was coming to camp with you guys after I walked the dog, so I decided to pay you two lovebirds a visit." He said that last part snarkily. He

definitely sounds a lot more confident after he went back.

“Oh, screw you Joey,” I said playing along with him. He laughed, and after he dropped the dog back off at the house, he joined up with us at the camp. For about an hour, we were just relaxing around the campfire; just chilling out and finally taking our minds off of the disappearances, just for a little while. That was until I heard a faint growling around our campsite.

Then I heard snorting.

Then I felt what could be described as a disgustingly warm breath on my neck.

When I looked behind me, I could feel my blood run cold. It was The Blightwood! At that horrifying moment, the creature I heard of was real, and was as horrifying as I thought it would be.

You could have sworn that the world froze. No one said anything. No one did anything. Nothing happened. When I finally realized what I was looking at, I was pulled by Pat to safety and we all ran off. When we were all on the other side, it didn't do anything. It just stood there, almost as if it wanted us to run...like prey.

We slowly walked backwards away from it, but the second we did, it made a clicking noise, almost as if it were taunting us, or preparing to attack. We started to run almost immediately. We felt too afraid to scream for our lives from that thing, but anytime we looked back, it was still there, making that clicking sound, still taunting us.

Then, like a blink of an eye, it dashed at us. It looked like a wolf trying to hunt down and catch its prey. None of us looked back, too afraid to see if any more of those rumors came true. None of us, and I mean not a single

one of us, wanted to take that terrifying chance. We kept running and running. We ran so far that it felt like we were running forever, like an eternal chase. Eventually, we managed to lose it, or it somehow lost us.

We stopped by a cabin. The wood was old and dirty, the hinges were rusted and rigid, and the cabin looked like it took a lot of abuse over time. We decided to rest here for a single moment. Joseph looked paranoid, looking everywhere for those bright golden eyes it had, while trying not to stare too long. Pat looked like he was on the verge of a mental breakdown; he was shaking like a leaf, his eyes looked shot, and he was pacing back and forth. I was trying not to freak out.

Once Pat got his bearings, he proposed we stay the night in here, just in case it was still out there looking for us. Once Joseph was done looking and making sure the coast was clear, he found a familiar face.

“Amanda? Is that you?” Joseph said, shocked and almost on the verge of tears from his happiness. He was happy to see her again.

We walked in to see that she was alive and well. We all hugged her on the spot, and it seems that she shared the same sentiment as she hugged us back.

“I’m glad to see you guys, you genuinely have no idea how much I’m glad to see you,” she said, almost sounding like she was going to cry. I wouldn’t blame her, since being here for almost 9 hours with a creature as disgusting as that would make even the toughest guy sound like he was gonna cry.

It was almost heartbreaking seeing Amanda like this. She used to be the most emotionally vulnerable, and always tried to keep a good mood, even if it was a farce, but, here, she just wanted to collapse and cry.

I told Pat to make sure to look outside to see if the coast was clear while we asked Amanda what happened. She had managed to convince Quinn to go out to stay the night in the woods as a show of defiance against Quinn's parents for not letting him see her again after an incident where he got his arm broken. When they were finally settling down, the monster attacked. Quinn looked up at its eyes by mistake, then its jaws, then the inside of its mouth, then not at all. Amanda looked like she was going to burst into tears retelling everything that happened.

Joseph, Pat, and I were distraught hearing that Quinn was eaten by that thing. However, after the story, Pat was standing and looking outside, mesmerized. That's when I saw it again...The Blightwood.

I pulled his arm to the ground, hard. It seemed to have snapped him out of it since he was gasping for air and struggling to breath. He thanked me, looking genuinely grateful for me saving him.

Luckily, I recognized this place after getting over the sudden shock of the first encounter. We weren't far from the park ranger's cabin, so all we had to do was run there and we were all set. The only problem was that the creature was in the way, blocking our escape.

Pat had an idea. He wanted to use Amanda's perfume she had in her bag with my lighter in case it decided to pursue us. He was hoping that, since the creature was made of wood, the flame would burn it. I wanted to tell him that it wouldn't work, but, having no other options, I decided to put my trust in him.

We decided to make the idea to try to run around it, but it managed to outpace us very quickly. It made that mocking clicking sound again, almost telling us there was no escape, but, then, Pat finally put his plan into motion by igniting the lighter and spraying the perfume

in the creature's direction. To our surprise, it worked, and the creature was lit up in a beautiful yet horrific sight. We ran past it, wasting no time to get to safety.

After a night of chaos, we made it to the park rangers' cabin. We were finally safe. We made sure to tell the park rangers everything about what had happened that night; about us looking for Amanda and Quinn, about The Blightwood, and about how we got here. The park rangers looked like we were crazy for a minute, but they were glad we were safe. They made sure to let us stay the rest of the night, and told us that they'd call our parents about what had happened.

When I made it home, I called everyone to make sure they were alright. Amanda was still heartbroken about Quinn's death, which was to be expected. Joseph called his therapist so he could cope with the situation, but Pat wanted to thank me again for trusting him. I told him if it wasn't for him, we would have all shared Quinn's fate.

I don't know if I can say that I regret going out to look for Amanda and Quinn; if we didn't, Amanda would have died, and I don't regret saving her at all.

The St. Andrews Tree

Drayton Cook

As you turn into the St. Andrews campus from South Main Street, you are greeted with a row of trees when you come to the roundabout heading toward the Scottish Heritage Center. After you pass the Scottish Heritage Center and follow the road to the left, you are greeted with the St. Andrews fighting Scotsman statue. After turning right then left into the first parking lot, follow the first row of parking spaces to the “Future Knight” placards.

The majestic St. Andrews tree stands furthest to the right by the Future St Andrews Knight placard in the LA building parking lot. The tree stands tall and proud, casting a protective shadow over the landscape. Its presence is both captivating and inspiring, beckoning all who pass by to stop and ponder its grandeur. This vibrant tree holds a special place in my heart as it provides a sense of relaxation to me. I am sure it has witnessed countless moments of joy, sadness, and growth throughout the years from many students past and present.

One cannot help but be enchanted by the sheer size and beauty of the St. Andrews tree. Its trunk is sturdy and weathered, exhibiting scars from past storms that only add to its character. The scars are pitted in places, raised in places, and are browner in color as they cut into the tree. The bark glistens with shades of grey and brown, resembling an intricately woven tapestry. As I run my hand along its rough exterior, I can feel the life force pulsating beneath my fingertips.

The branches reach out like welcoming arms, adorned with an abundance of verdant leaves that dance with the wind's gentle caress. These leaves are a vibrant shade of green during spring and summer months, creating a lush canopy overhead that provides shelter for those

seeking refuge from the scorching sun. The leaves smell fresh and sweet. They are narrow, long, and pointed.

In the mornings, nestled within and on the tree, are many birds, chirping and gifting me with wonderful songs to begin my days. The tree, birds, squirrels, and other creatures are a testament to the symbiotic relationship between this mighty tree and the creatures that depend on it for sustenance and a place for rest.

Perhaps what truly sets this St. Andrews tree apart is not just its physical attributes but also its symbolism. It stands as a silent witness to the cycles of life – birth, growth, death, and rebirth – reminding us of our own mortality while urging us to embrace the fleeting moments we have been granted. I can't imagine the sights this tree could tell if it had eyes. I wonder how many people have passed its great presence.

Underneath its sprawling branches lies a moss-covered ground, soft and inviting. The roots spread around the base of the tree in all directions for 5-6 feet. Some roots are just barely above the dirt whereas some are almost laying on top of the dirt. The yellowish-green moss covers many of the roots and the earth between the roots.

The St. Andrews tree is not just an individual entity; it is part of a greater ecosystem that flourishes under its watchful eye. Small grey birds, blue jays, and cardinals find solace among its branches. Frisky squirrels scamper along its trunk with agile grace, storing acorns for the long winter ahead. The dance of life unfolds beneath its canopy, reminding us of our interconnectedness with all living things.

The St. Andrews tree stands as a symbol of strength and resilience amidst the ever-changing world around us. Its beauty captivates all who encounter it while offering solace and inspiration to those who seek it. As I gaze up at its towering presence, I am reminded of the

importance of cherishing nature's wonders and
cultivating a sense of harmony with the world we
inhabit.

A Salute to the Stars: A string of haikus

Anna Phelps

It was blusterous,
but she stood, staring beyond,
steady in her stance.

Her mind was fractured,
but the wind helped her forget
the pain she was in.

She looked down below,
watching the waves ebb and flow
as she deeply wept.

Her eyes gently closed,
and she remembered her past,
before she was hurt.

The sky was star-filled,
the air chilled, but comforting,
the crickets longing.

She lay on the grass,
becoming a silhouette
to the falling mist.

Her hand was clasped tight,
snug around her dazed father's,
both lost in the night.

Her mind wandered wide,
curiosity tempting.
She looked at her dad.

"Papa," she began,
"Are the stars guarding heaven?"
He looked to her eyes.

"What a question, love.
Stars like to play with angels,
they guard together."

She smiled warmly,
gazing softly at his face.
"What a world," she thought.

"Papa," she tempted.
"How do they ceaselessly shine?"
He let out a sigh.

"Well, dear," he started,
"I suppose God keeps them bright,
as we do lanterns."

She was delighted,
imagining God dancing
amongst His lanterns.

"Papa," she pondered,
"Why don't the stars fall to Earth?"
He let out a laugh.

"Well, darling," he said,
"Their strings stay invisible--
darkness' magic trick."

She gasped, looking up.
"The darkness is frightening."
Their hands clasped tighter.

"My joy," he whispered,
"Don't be afraid of darkness.
It provides comfort."

"But how?" she asked him.
He thought, and answered with this:
"It never forgets."

She was skeptical,
but was now weary from thought.
Her eyes fluttered shut.

"Papa," she exhaled.
"Even if it does, I won't."
She lay limp, asleep.

Tears ran down his face.
"Me neither, my love," he breathed.
He lifted her up.

He whispered some more.
"The stars will watch you, my love.
I'll be one of them."

.....

She opened her eyes,
gazing back at the water,
tears stroking her face.

Engulfed in sorrow,
the memory embraced her,
keeping him alive.

Night crept from the hills,
covering the sky with stars.
She started for home.

"I still remember,"
she shared amongst the glitter,
her eyes toward the ground.

He saw her mourning,
so he turned to God, asking,
"Please shine me brighter."

Just like a lantern,
God gave him abundant light,
But she didn't see.

So God cut his thread
and struck lightning to the sky.
She glanced to the stars.

God looked at the girl.
"Bring your hands together, love."
Confused, she obeyed.

Her hands became cupped,
and God released him to her.
She held him and cried.

"Oh, Papa," she hushed.
She bowed her head to the star,
"I'll never forget."

The cheater

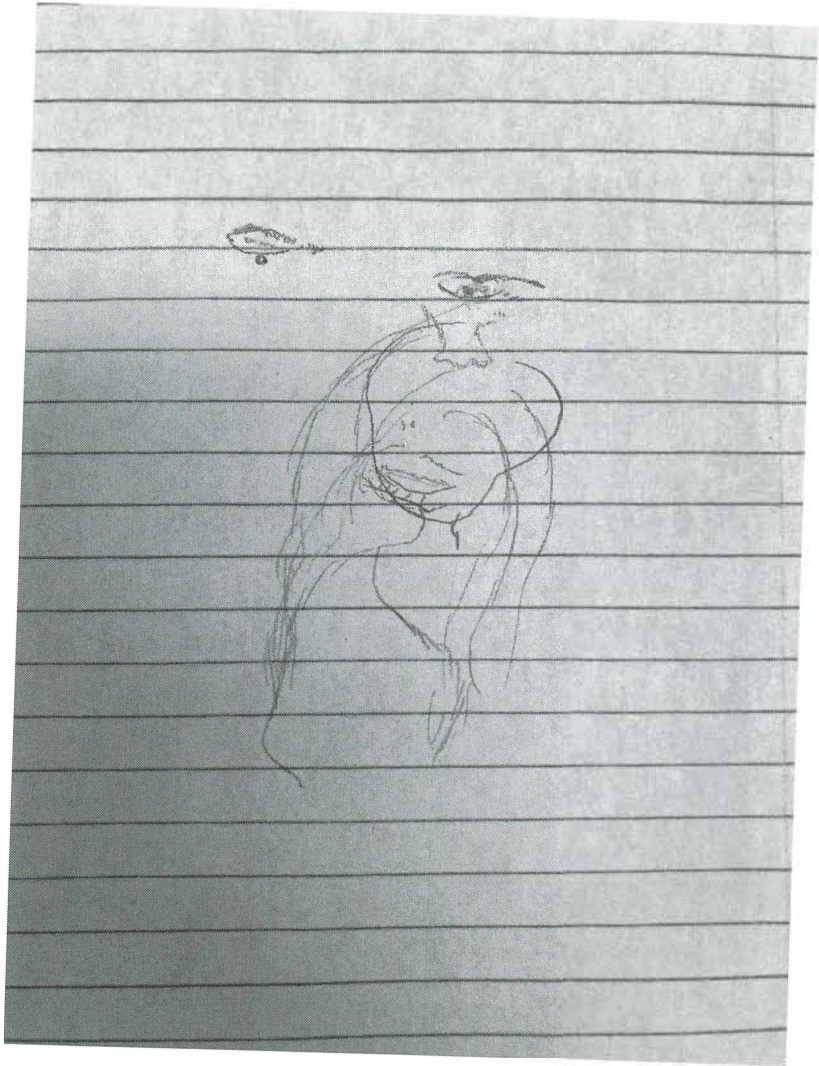
Emily Rollins

I can't shake this feeling, this nagging doubt
I can't ignore this voice, this whispering shout
I can't explain this change, this sudden shift
I can't deny this fear, this growing rift

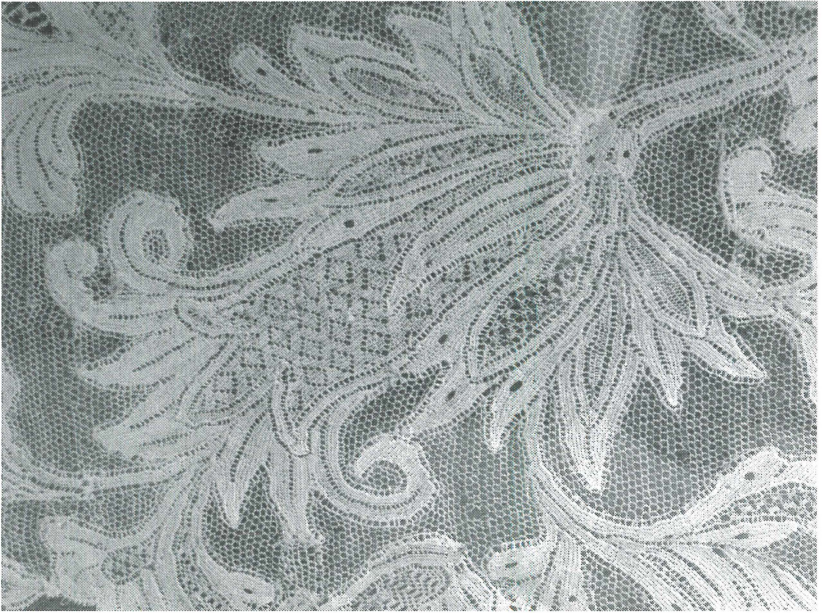
You are not the same, you are distant and cold
You are not here, you are elsewhere and bold
You are not honest, you are secretive and vague
You are not loyal, you are cheating and fake

You don't look at me, you don't see me anymore
You don't talk to me, you don't hear me anymore
You don't touch me, you don't feel me anymore
You don't love me, you don't want me anymore

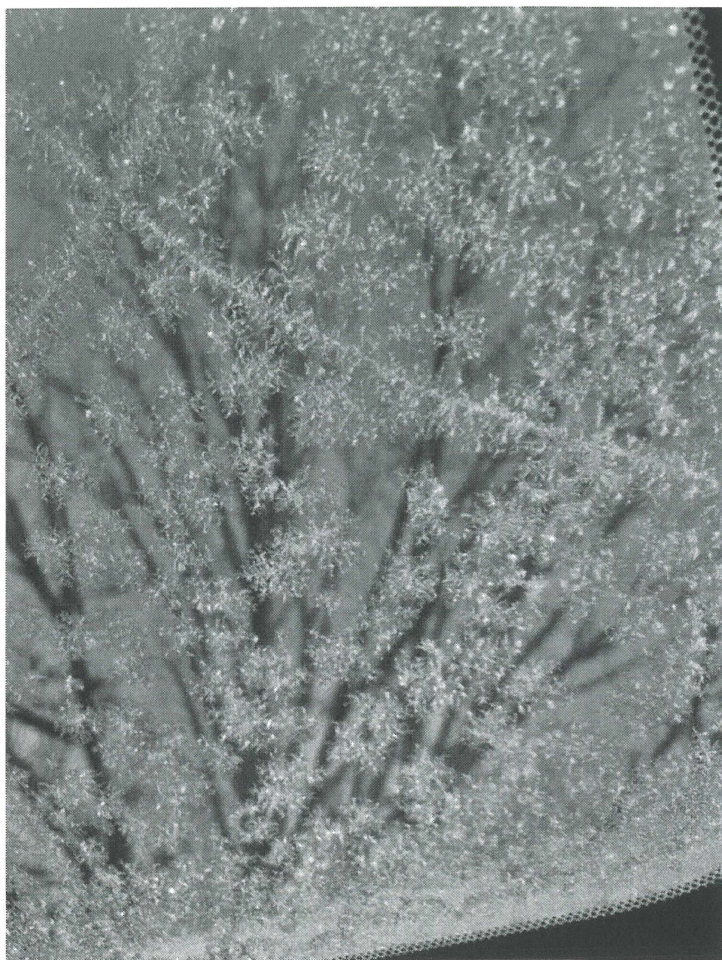
You are breaking my heart, you are tearing me apart
You are lying to my face, you are playing with my trust
You are hurting me deeply, you are killing me slowly
You are cheating on me, you are betraying me



Peeled Banana
Danksy



Burano Lace Museum
Betsy Dendy



Frost
Peyton Schmidt

Sweet Month of May

A Madrigal by John M. Andrews

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Excerpt from Alice Wilkins:

“This is a madrigal written by my father, Dr. John M. Andrews, 1909-2000, Professor of violin and counterpoint at Houghton College (now Houghton University), Houghton, NY.

Edited and published by his daughter, Alice Andrews Wilkins.”

The Inspiration:

HYMNE IV.

TO THE MONETH OF MAY.

E ACH day of thine, sweet moneth of May,
L oue makes a solemne holy-day.
I will performe like duty,
S ith thou resemblest euery way
A straa, Queen of beauty,

B oth you fresh beauties do pertake,
E ither's aspect doth Summer make,
T houghts of young Loue awaking ;
H earts you both doe cause to ake,
A nd yet be pleas'd with akeing.

R ight deare art thou, and so is shee,
E uen like attractiue sympathy,
G aines vnto both like dearenesse ;
I weene this made Antiquitie
N ame thee, sweet *May of Maiestie*,
A s being both like in *clearnesse*.

Sir John Davies (1529-1626)

Sweet Month of May

John M. Andrews
1909-2001

Soprano

Each day of thine sweet month of May, sweet month of May, of -
Thoughts of young love a - wak - ing, a - wak -
I ween this made An - ti - qui - tie, An - ti - qui -

Alto

Each day of thine sweet month of May, sweet
Thoughts of young love a - wak - ing, a - wak -
I ween this made An - ti - qui - tie, An -

Tenor

Each day of thine sweet month of
Thoughts of young love a - wak -
I ween this made An - ti - qui -

5

- - - May, love makes a so - lemni ho -
- - - ing, and yet be pleased with ake -
- - - tie, thee, sweet May of Ma -

month of May, love makes a so - lemni ho - li -
ti - qui - tie, and yet be pleased with ake -
name thee, sweet May of Ma -

May, of May, love makes a so - lemni ho - li - day, love
ing, a - wak - ing, and yet be pleased with ake - ing, and
tie, name thee, sweet May of Ma - jes - tie, sweet May of

9

- li - day, each day of thine sweet month of May, sweet
- ing, thoughts of young love a - wak - ing, and
- jes - tie, I ween this made An - ti - qui - tie, An -

- day, each day of thine sweet month of May, sweet
- ing, thoughts of young love a - wak - ing, and
- jes - tie, I ween this made An - ti - qui - tie, name thee, sweet

makes a so - lemni ho - li - day, each day of thine sweet month -
yet be pleased with ake - ing, thoughts of young love a - wak -
Ma - jes - tie, I ween this made An - ti - qui - tie, An - ti -

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month yet be pleased with ake of May, love makes a so - lemn
yet ti be pleased with ake qui ing, and yet be pleased May with
of tie, name thee, sweet May of

month yet be pleased with ake of May, love makes a so - lemn
May be pleased with Ma - jes - tie, and name thee, sweet May of

ing, and yet be pleased with ake of [May], [love] makes a so - lemn
yet be pleased with ake ing, and yet be pleased May of
qui - tie, name thee, sweet May of

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ho - li - day, love makes a so - lemn ho - li - day.
ake - ing, and yet be pleased with ake - ing.
Ma - jes - tie, name thee, sweet May of Ma - jes - tie.

ho - li - day, love makes a so - lemn ho - li - day.
ake - ing, and yet be pleased with ake - ing.
Ma - jes - tie, name thee, sweet May of Ma - jes - tie.

ho - li - day, love makes a so - lemn ho - li - day.
ake - ing, and yet be pleased with ake - ing.
Ma - jes - tie, name thee, sweet May of Ma - jes - tie.

The text of the madrigal is taken from Hymne IV to Elizabeth I by Sir John Davies. The original manuscript contains only the first verse; verses two and three have been added by Alice A. Wilkins and Thom Culbreth. The complete text is on the back cover of this edition.

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